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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: YORUBA CONTROL OF SOUTHWEST POLITICS A
THING OF THE PAST?

Classified By: ACTING CONSUL GENERAL JOSEPH GREGOIRE FOR REASONS 1.5 (B

) AND (D).

[11.](#) (U) Summary. Ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) sweeps in recent legislative and gubernatorial elections show that rule of "old line" leaders of the mainly-Yoruba Alliance for Democracy Party and the Yoruba socio-cultural organization, Afenifere, has ended. Five of the six States in the southwest have gone to PDP and a younger group of politicians. This may signal a more progressive governance in the region, at least for the near term. End Summary.

Licking the wounds

[12.](#) (C) Leaders of the largely-Yoruba Alliance for Democracy Party (AD) and the Yoruba socio-cultural organization, Afenifere, met four days after the April 19 presidential and gubernatorial elections to try to muddle together a position in the face of the AD's astonishing defeat in five of the six southwestern States they had controlled since the elections of 1999. The group issued a resolution rejecting the election results but stopped short of threats of court challenges that other politicians have made. Instead, they stated that the validity of the elections and the determination of the rightful winner would be left to the "tribunal of God and the court of public opinion." The resolution also rejected reports that AD National Chairman Ahmed Abdulkadri had officially conceded a presidential victory to Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate and current President, Olusegun Obasanjo. Trying to find someone to blame for the debacle, an AD source told PolOffs that some in the group accused Abdulkadri of being in cahoots with the PDP to the detriment and destruction of the AD.

[13.](#) (C) AD and Afenifere have given the media a list of alleged irregularities in the April 12 legislative elections and the April 19 gubernatorial elections. (AD did not field a presidential candidate, and thus, has no standing to challenge that election.) The leaders of the two groups were to have met again on April 24th to consider what action they will take with respect to this matter, but sources have told PolOffs that the decision is unlikely to contradict the decision already taken, i. e. not to challenge the elections in court. Ironically, the PDP is apparently going after the one southwestern State it did not capture, Lagos State. The losing candidate, Funso Williams (PDP), has submitted a petition charging gross irregularities in the gubernatorial election that went to AD Governor Bola Tinubu. Although some irregularities were reported by all elections observers, there appears to be little chance that Williams' challenge will succeed.

What happened and what's next?

[14.](#) (C) Consulate sources and most media observers blame the AD and Afenifere current troubles on complacency. Since the First Republic, AD (evolving from the Yoruba base in predecessor organization like the United Party of Nigeria and the Social Democratic Party) and Afenifere had an easy time of marshaling support of the Yoruba in the southwest. This was so much so that many observers still refer to the region as the "monolithic" southwest. However, beginning with the elections of 1999, leaders of the group apparently became over-confident and began to neglect the constant care and feeding necessary to sustain a loyal constituency. Added to this, Afenifere began to try to reshape itself as a political organization, if not superior to AD, then at least AD's equal in demanding Yoruba loyalty. Obasanjo, a Yoruba and PDP candidate, won neither the hearts nor the votes of Yorubas in the southwest and got no support from Afenifere in 1999. As a consequence, he is reportedly behind the formation of the

Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) in 2001. The YCE, widely regarded as the tool of Obasanjo, publicly eschews any political aspirations and claims its focus is only "socio-cultural."

15. (C) An aide to Governor Tinubu told PolOff that leaders of AD would be meeting during the next months to shape a "new AD" and a "new Deal" for the Yoruba. With five of the governors in the southwest heavily financed, solidly backed by the majority party and ready to make names for themselves and their party, AD will have a difficult road ahead. Media observers have commented that the new bloc of young Yoruba governors will no longer be directed by the "politics of gerontocratics" of the old leaders of any political party and Afenifere has lost its influence over this generation of political leaders. Some observers have pointed to the assassination of Justice Minister Chief Bola Ige, a strong opponent of Afenifere's mixing in politics, as the point where Yorubas began to lose faith in both the AD and Afenifere.

State by State

16. (C) Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu was always expected to be retained in office. Despite grumbling from some losing candidates, Tinubu has already begun to consolidate his win by accepting congratulations from opponents and beginning to pay off campaign debts. In Ondo State age, in the person of incumbent Adebayo Adefarati, bowed to the relative youth of PDP candidate Dr. Oluegun Agagu. Although, Adefarati had made no statement rejecting or accepting defeat to date, Agagu has already published a victory message and solicited "suggestions from the people to improve the State." Chief Bisi Akande, in Osun State is apparently the only loser to step aside gracefully. One day after Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola (PDP) was declared the winner, Akande set up a seventeen member transition team to handle the turn-over to his successor.

17. (C) The biggest surprise upset came in Ogun State where Governor Olusegun Osoba was unseated by Otunba Gbenga Daniel. Osoba was expected to win re-election because he had turned in the best performance of any of the southwest governors except Tinubu. He was described by observers as a superb politician campaigning tirelessly across the State and drawing large enthusiastic crowds. He was also reported to have the support of the traditional rulers in Ogun. However, as soon as Daniel was declared the winner and President Obasanjo sent a congratulatory message, the traditional rulers hurried to congratulate Daniel, too, and urge the loser to "accept defeat in good faith and the spirit of sportsmanship."

18. (C) After the April 12 legislative elections showed PDP making big inroads into AD's southwest power base, many projected that of the six vulnerable governors, Lamidi Adesina of Oyo State would most certainly lose his job. Adesina had lost support of the Oyo citizens by failure to deliver government services, alienating local leaders, and lavishing government money and jobs on his friends and family. As predicted, Adesina lost to rival Senator Rasheed Ladoja of the PDP.

19. (C) Following the April 12 legislative losses, Governor Niyi Adebayo, charged out with renewed vigor to wage a week-long, door-to-door campaign to save his seat in tiny Eketi State. Although a close race down to the finish, Adebayo lost to PDP's Peter Ayo Fayose. There has been no word from either camp on whether the election will be challenged or accepted.

110. (C) Comment. Nigerian voters in this series of elections appeared to be more enthusiastic about their ability to affect government by their votes. Political parties, especially the AD, were taken by surprise that voters would not only complain about bad government but come out in significant numbers and stand in the hot sun or driving rain to vote to make changes in their leadership. The new governors and legislators now have four years to prove that the voters were right to trust democracy, and the voters have four years to see that they can have change if the new leaders fail to deliver. AD and Afenifere leaders seem to have rejected, however, any notion that their ousting from southwest seats of power had any direct link to voter preference. They claim that fraud alone explains their poor showing in the elections.

HINSON-JONES